



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report by OSCE Head of Office in Yerevan Vladimir Pryakhin

As delivered by Charge d'Affaires Douglas Davidson
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 18, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States is pleased to welcome Ambassador Pryakhin back to the Permanent Council and we thank him highly for his comprehensive report on the activities of the OSCE Office in Yerevan.

In less than a year since taking on the Head of Office position, Ambassador Pryakhin has quickly and energetically engaged on a number of issues that are important to the OSCE. We commend him and his staff for their outstanding commitment to promoting OSCE principles.

There are, Mr. Chairman, too many areas in which the Office is carrying out meaningful work for me to list them all or discuss them here. I would however, like to take particular note of, and commend the Ambassador and his staff for, the following particular items:

To begin, let me say that Ambassador Pryakhin has been a champion of media freedom. He has rightly raised concerns with the authorities over violence and harassment against journalists, as well as the loss of licenses of two independent broadcasters. These are issues the United States has also raised both bilaterally and here in the Permanent Council. His continuing monitoring of media freedom and his coordination with the Special Representative on Freedom of the Media demonstrates Ambassador Pryakhin's commitment and that of his Mission staff to OSCE principles in this area.

Ambassador Pryakhin is to be commended for playing a constructive and neutral role in encouraging dialogue to resolve the political impasse between the government and the opposition parties. It is our hope that all parties will resume a dialogue soon.

The Office's engagement on the issue of freedom of assembly has been significant. We welcomed the National Assembly's passage in April of the new law on public gatherings, which was drafted at the suggestion of, and with input from, the OSCE Office in Yerevan. While the law's passage is a positive step, we now urge the Armenian authorities to heed the Office's recommendations to revise the language in order to bring it fully in line with OSCE standards.

The United States is pleased to see the Office is continuing to conduct activities in the area of police assistance and judicial reform, which are key to strengthening democratic institutions and respect for human rights. The United States provides substantial bilateral assistance in these areas, thus reinforcing the efforts of the Office.

We also appreciate the OSCE Office's record on receiving and conveying complaints on alleged human rights abuses. In his report, Ambassador Pryakhin has noted the establishment earlier this year of an Ombudsman's office in Armenia. We very much hope that this institution will now take on the role of receiving and handling human rights complaints.

We also appreciate the OSCE Office's ongoing assistance to the Armenian government towards the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1373, as well as other international counter-terrorism agreements.

In sum, Mr. Chairman, the United States wished to congratulate Ambassador Pryakhin and his staff for the fine work they are doing in all three OSCE dimensions. We wish him well as he continues to face a wide array of challenges. We would like to say to the Ambassador and his staff, please keep up the good work!

I thank you very much.